

---

## BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS

---

---

### Research activities among health sciences librarians: a survey

By Amrita J. Burdick, M.A.  
*Assistant Chief Health Sciences Librarian*

*Health Sciences Library  
University of Missouri–Kansas City  
2411 Holmes  
Kansas City, Missouri 64108-2792*

Carol A. Doms, M.A.  
*Assistant Dental Librarian*

*School of Dentistry–Library  
University of Missouri–Kansas City  
650 East 25th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64108-2795*

Cecile C. Doty, M.S.L.S.  
*Head, Cataloging Section*

*Dykes Library of the Health Sciences  
University of Kansas Medical Center  
2100 West 39th Street  
Kansas City, Kansas 66103*

Lenora A. Kinzie, M.L.S.  
*Medical Librarian*

*Library of Health Resources  
St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center  
1700 West 7th Street  
Topeka, Kansas 66606*

### INTRODUCTION

In early 1988, the Midcontinental Chapter of the Medical Library Association (MCMLA) queried the membership about research activities, the constraints they experienced in conducting research, and the ways in which professional organizations could support research. In this study, research was broadly defined as a wide range of activity that included practical as well as scholarly endeavors as legitimate research [1–2]. This broad definition was intended to expand librarians' perceptions of research and to encourage research activity.

### THE SURVEY

MCMLA includes Wyoming, Utah, South Dakota,

Colorado, Nebraska, Missouri, and Kansas, with members in diverse health information settings. Of the 227 surveys mailed to the membership, 170 were returned (75% response rate). Because of the high percentage of members responding, a follow-up was not conducted. Total responses were calculated for each question and percentages provided as a means of comparison (Appendix).

### FINDINGS

The most frequent constraints to research indicated were time, money, and insecurity about research skills (Table 1). The survey indicated that the respondents wanted support from professional organizations in research design and statistical support (59%), identifying funding sources (50%), and providing information on publishing opportunities (42%). The most frequently desired continuing education (CE) courses were research methodology (50%), problem identification (44%), and writing skills (36%).

### DISCUSSION

Professional organizations need to recognize the value of both practical and theoretical research. Librarianship has viewed research warily, and writers have expressed conflicting ideas about what research is. Some practitioners have perceived research as an elitist concern best left to experienced researchers. This has been reinforced by authors who lamented widespread publication of practical research as an indication of lack of professionalism [3–7]. This view has promoted research "as something esoteric, remote, or impractical" [8]—leaving librarians insecure and discouraging them from conducting research in nonacademic settings. For example, the survey found that hospital librarians in nonacademic settings reported research activity least frequently.

In *Shaping the Future: The Strategic Plan of the Medical Library Association*, the Medical Library Association (MLA) has identified a research goal, with three objectives and strategies necessary to achieve this goal [9]. The goal "improving health through professional excellence and leadership in research in health information science" includes the following objectives: advocating the role of professionals in research, improving education for the conduct of research, and supporting research in health information science.

In light of these goals and the needs of new or insecure researchers identified in this survey, the following are recommended activities for professional organizations in promoting research:

**Table 1**  
Constraints to research activity versus reported research

Constraint	Research activity		Growth*	Publication
	Grant writing	Presentation		
All respondents† (N = 170)	51 (30%)	72 (42%)	46 (27%)	36 (21%)
Time (n = 132)	44 (33%)	63 (48%)	39 (30%)	28 (21%)
Money (n = 63)	20 (32%)	32 (51%)	19 (30%)	14 (22%)
Insecurity (n = 62)	19 (31%)	29 (45%)	17 (27%)	14 (23%)
Ideas (n = 43)	13 (30%)	18 (42%)	12 (28%)	9 (21%)
Support (n = 32)	9 (28%)	13 (41%)	5 (16%)	5 (16%)
Interest (n = 31)	6 (19%)	8 (26%)	4 (13%)	3 (10%)
Access (n = 13)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	4 (31%)	0 (0%)

\* Growth includes personal research for professional development.

† N does not equal n because multiple barriers could be chosen.

■ Present CE courses on research methodology, statistics, and writing at a basic (and nonthreatening) level.

■ Coordinate informational and research support networks.

■ Provide financial support for education related to developing research skills, as well as continuing research support via project grants.

■ Work with related professional organizations such as the American Hospital Association and the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations to promote administrative support for research by hospital librarians as part of regular duties.

As a result of this survey, the following activities supporting research have been initiated by MCMLA:

■ Several articles on research have been published in the chapter's newsletter, the *Express*, including articles on identifying grant sources, preparing a proposal, and conducting research in the small medical library [10-12].

■ A poster session recognizing members' research activities was given at the annual MCMLA meeting.

■ A CE course on a research topic was offered at the annual MCMLA meeting.

■ The chapter has approved funding for a research-related grant. Research continues to be a high priority in the chapter, and activities that support research will be continued and expanded in the coming year.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to the MCMLA, the Archie R. Dykes Library of the Health Sciences of the University of Kansas Medical Center, the Health Sciences Library of the University of Missouri-Kansas City, the MCMLA Executive Committee, Sandra Parker, and Peggy Mullaly.

## REFERENCES

1. LYNCH MJ. Research and librarianship: an uneasy connection. *Libr Trends* 1984 Spring;32(4):367-83.
2. MIELE A. Library research—past, present, and future. *J Libr Educ* 1979 Fall;20(2):136-41.
3. ENNIS PH. Commitment to research. *Wilson Libr Bull* 1967 May;41:899-901.
4. FREEMAN MS. The simplicity of his pragmatism: librarians and research. *Libr J* 1985 May 15;110(9):27-9.
5. GROVER R, GLAZIER J. A conceptual framework for theory building in library and information science. *Libr Inf Sci Res* 1986 Jan;8:227-42.
6. HEILPRIN LB. The library community at a technological and philosophical crossroads; necessary and sufficient conditions for survival. *J Am Soc Inf Sci* 1980 Nov;31(6):389-95.
7. ROBBINS J. Research skill for research librarians: a report on an example from an educational program. *J Acad Libr* 1989 Mar;15(1):4-6.
8. MULLER RH. The research mind in library education and practice. *Libr J* 1967 Mar 15;92:1126-9.
9. MEDICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION. Shaping the future: the strategic plan of the Medical Library Association. *MLA News* 1987 Apr;(196):S1-S16.
10. KINZIE L. Why do research in the small medical library? *MCMLA Express* 1989 Summer;11(3):9.
11. MULLALY P. The money hunt (part 1: identifying granting sources). *MCMLA Express* 1989 Winter;11(1):9-12.
12. PARKER S. Results of the Research Idea Team survey. *MCMLA Express* 1989 Winter;11(1):9.

Received September 1989; accepted February 1990

## APPENDIX

### Research survey

The Research Idea Team is an *ad hoc* committee of MCMLA, appointed to identify ways that MCMLA can support the research efforts of its members. Your prompt response on the following questionnaire will aid us in achieving that goal. Results will be shared via the *Express*. Individual questionnaires will be kept confidential.

1. What barriers have you experienced in conducting research?

- ☐ Time  
☐ Money  
☐ Not interested in research  
☐ Insecurity about research skills  
☐ Little or no access to research literature or research tools  
☐ No management support of research  
☐ Lack of research ideas  
☐ Other (please specify)

Comments:

2. What would you like to see the Research Idea Team do to facilitate research at the regional level?

- ☐ Provide research design and statistical support
- ☐ Identify funding sources
- ☐ Distribute information on opportunities for publishing
- ☐ Establish formal recognition by MCMLA of research activities
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Comments:

3. What CE courses would you be interested in?

- ☐ Research methodology
- ☐ Statistics
- ☐ Statistical software
- ☐ Research-writing skills
- ☐ Time management
- ☐ Problem identification
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Comments:

4. Have you participated in any of the following areas of research in the past five years?

- ☐ Grant proposals
- ☐ Made presentations/unpublished papers
- ☐ Published papers/books
- ☐ Research for professional growth
- ☐ Other (please specify)

5. With what institution is your library affiliated?

- ☐ Hospital
- ☐ Academic
- ☐ Corporate/information broker
- ☐ Other (please specify)

6. What is your area of library expertise?

- ☐ Technical services
- ☐ Public services
- ☐ Audiovisual services
- ☐ Administration
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Please return survey to Cecile Doty by June 15, 1988. Thank you for participating.

## FROM THE BULLETIN—25 YEARS AGO

### An analysis of Japanese medical periodicals

By Mayumi Taniguchi, Bibliographic Services Division, National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland

The history of Japanese journals goes back about 100 years, when Western civilization first began to flood a people who had stayed quietly in their own land without interference from outsiders for 250 years. The first periodical ever published in Japan was *Seiyo Zasshi* (Journal of the Occidental World), edited by Shunsan Yanagawa from October 1867 to September 1869. The first medical periodical was published by an Englishman, William Willis, in 1869 under the title, *Nikko Kibun* (Records of Daily Lectures). The second one was also published by a Westerner, the Dutch physician, Anthonius F. Bauduin, in December 1869 and was also called *Nikko Kibun*. Four years later, *Bunen Zasshi* (Journal of Literary Bower), the first medical periodical published by a Japanese, appeared.

In the Western world, on the contrary, there were two periodicals as early as two centuries prior to the Japanese: *Journal des savans* and *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (1665). The first medical periodical, *Acta medica et philosophica Hafniensia* of the Royal Medical and Philosophical Society of Copenhagen, was published in 1671, and by the early nineteenth century the famous bibliographer, Plouquet, cried out over the mass of publication:

The job would be simpler if the legacy were smaller, but the wealth of material overwhelms us, and we are blinded by too much light. . . . To make matters worse, no day passes but someone throws another article upon this mountain of material. . . . 'Our life is too short, and there are so many books; money is so scarce, and there is so little time.'

Bull Med Libr Assoc 1965 Jan;53(1):44-5